

REMARKS

Claims 1-9, 16-22, and 27-33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by *Bowen et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,076,688) (hereinafter *Bowen*). The applicants' representative kindly thanks the Examiner for his kind indication of allowable subject matter as to claims 10-15 and 23-26.

Claims 1 & 23 have been cancelled and Claims 2, 3, 4, 9, 19, 21, 22, and 24 have been amended to further clarify patentable subject matter of the invention. Thus, Claims 2-22 and 24-33 are now pending in this application.

Rejection of All Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §102:

Independent Claims 1 & 22 (and the associated) dependent claims have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by *Bowen*. Claim 1 has been cancelled thereby making moot this ground of rejection.

Claim 9 has been amended into independent form incorporating all the limitations of cancelled Claim 1. The inventors point out that Claim 9 recites that "each of the rods are made of a material capable of transmitting optical light signals such that light entering a distal end of one of the rods can be transmitted through the handle and to a distal end of the other rod". This is not the case in *Bowen*. This point is made abundantly clear by the fact that *Bowen* requires an optical fiber 11 (See, *Bowen*, Fig. 3) to transmit optical signal through the plugs 17, 18.

The claimed invention does not require an optical fiber and therefore disposes with a required element of the cited art. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully submit that the cited art does not teach all of the claim limitations and thus cannot support the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 2 be withdrawn.

As now amended Claims 3-21 now depend directly or indirectly on amended Claim 9. For at least the reasons advanced herein with respect to Claim 9 it is submitted that these dependent claims are also allowable. Moreover, many other reasons for allowance are also present in the dependent claims 2-22. This fact is borne out by the Examiner's kind acknowledgement of allowable subject matter as to, for example, Claims 10-15. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the rejections of Claims 2-22 be withdrawn.

Claim 22, and the claims depending therefrom, were also rejected on similar grounds (i.e., anticipated by *Bowen*) as made with respect to Claim 1. At the suggestion of the Examiner, Claim 22 is amended to include the limitations of Claim 23. Claim 23 is now cancelled and Claim 24 has been amended to depend on Claim 22. The Examiner has already stated that Claim 23 would be allowable if it incorporated all of the language of the independent base claim (Claim 22). This has been done in the form of the amendments to Claim 22 (upon which remaining claims 24-33 now depend). Thus, the claimed invention should distinguishable from the cited art. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully submit that the cited art does not teach all of the claim limitations of Claim 22 and thus cannot support the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 22 be withdrawn.

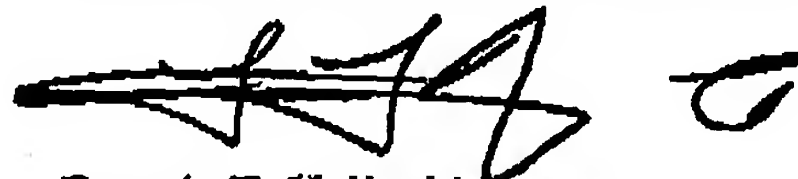
As now amended, Claims 24-33 depend directly or indirectly on amended Claim 22 which is allowable for at least the reasons explained above. For at least the reasons advanced in support of Claim 22, it is submitted that these dependent claims are also allowable. Moreover, many other reasons for allowance of dependent claims 24-33 can be assert should it prove necessary at a later time. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully submit that the asserted grounds for rejection have been overcome and therefore request that the rejections of Claims 22 and 24-33 be withdrawn.

Conclusion:

It is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are allowable and that this case is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this Amendment, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct such fees from the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 50-0388 (Order No. NSC1P272).

Respectfully submitted,
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